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**SHOW THE KIDS HOW IT'S DONE:
CELEBRATE FATHER'S DAY BY ADOPTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE**

National Men's Health Week is June 12-18

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Simply being male can be hazardous to your health. Consider these facts: Virginia men have higher rates of death than women from heart disease, cancer, stroke, injuries and diabetes, to name a few of Virginia's leading causes of death. The good news is that by adopting a healthy lifestyle, men can combat chronic disease, and teach their sons how to live longer and healthier too.

Part of the reason for the higher rates of death among men from certain health problems can be found in the lifestyles many men lead. Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. More Virginia men than women use tobacco, which is a risk factor for heart disease and lung cancer. Men are 10 times more likely to use chewing tobacco, which increases the risk of oral cancer by 50 percent, and men are twice as likely to have oral cancer as women.

Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death in the United States. Overweight and obese people have increased risks for heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes. Although obesity rates for Virginia men and women are nearly the same, hovering around 22 percent, fewer men eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, which increases their risk of developing high blood pressure, heart disease and some cancers.

"A healthy lifestyle is not a luxury, it's a lifesaver," said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. "A healthy diet, regular physical activity and regular health screenings are keys to achieving and maintaining good health."

By adopting healthy behaviors dads not only protect their own health, they also become healthy role models for their children. General guidelines men can follow include:

Eat healthy. It's actually what you *don't* eat and drink that has a significant impact on your health. Eat more fiber in fruits and vegetables and less fat from meat, dairy and fast foods to reduce your intake of cholesterol. Eat smaller portions and eat slowly. It takes 20 minutes before your stomach tells your brain you're full. Drink water and low-fat milk, and if you must drink soft drinks, choose diet sodas.

Be physically active. Strive for 30 minutes of moderate exercise per day most days of the week. Walking, biking and swimming are good exercises. Get your family involved to set a good example for your children. Start slowly and work up to a comfortable level.

Stop Using Tobacco. Smoking and chewing tobacco can lead to cancer, emphysema and other health problems. Second hand smoke can harm your children and those around you. If you need help quitting, call the Virginia Department of Health's Quit Line toll free at 1-800-QUIT NOW ((800) 784-8669). You can receive free one-on-one phone-based treatment sessions with a professional tobacco treatment quit coach.

(more)

Get routine screenings and immunizations. When health problems are found early, your chances for successful treatment increase significantly. Yet fewer men get screened for colon cancer, for example, which is the third most common cancer in Virginia. Begin regular screenings for colon and prostate cancer at age 50. Check your blood pressure every two years and cholesterol every five years. Normal blood pressure is 120 over 80 or below. Get an oral cancer exam at least once a year. Get a flu shot every year beginning at age 50, and for those over age 65, one pneumonia shot for life is sufficient.

Put safety first. Men are twice as likely to die from an injury as women. Firearms, motor vehicles and drowning are among the leading causes. Keep firearms locked away and store ammunition separately. Don't drink and drive, keep to safe speeds, wear seat belts and if you ride a motorcycle, wear a helmet. Swim with a buddy, wear a flotation device and be alert to tides and currents in natural bodies of water.

For more information on how dads can protect their health and maintain a healthy lifestyle, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on Healthy Living.

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